

scientific method of exterminating the
 unhappy natives
 on whose stolen lands he lived like a
 robber-baron in
 his castle, till one wild night they smoked
 him out of
 it to go and die, starved, in London. He has
 no sense of
 construction: the plan of his great poem is a
 rambling
 chaos. He has no sense of character: his
 personages are
 mere Virtues and Vices, half-animated
 platitudes galvan-
 ised out of the grave of a copy-book. His
 ideas, behind
 an iridescent fog of Platonism, are often
 nothing short of
 imbecile: seldom has man written who was
 less capable
 of the most rudimentary thinking. And yet,
 such is his
 inexhaustible vitality of imagination, his
 genius as a
 painter and musician in language, that he
 has survived
 despite himself. He could not disentangle
 his ideas; but
 he could dream, and he could sing. As was
 said of Lulli,
 'fl n'a que le genie, il n'a pas le sens
 commun'.

It is in prose rather than in poetry, that we
 might learn
 from France. Perhaps, indeed, no nation can
 ever teach
 another much. Nature may be too strong;
 and certainly
 the happiest parallels in our literature to
 the excellences
 of our neighbours, the irony of Chaucer,
 the graceful
 gaiety of Herrick, the perfect precision of
 Pope and Jane
 Austen, seem more the result of
 temperament than of
 direct imitation. The cruder
 transplantations of the Res-

toration bred little but weeds and
witherings. And yet
I cannot but believe that a closer contact
with French
might free us from some of the incubi of
English prose—
our tendencies to ponderousness and
pompousness and
obscurity and pedantry and cant.

For this persistent trait of the English
mind I am
tempted to coin the word 'hibouterie'. For
England is,
indeed, a country both of owls and
nightingales. Un-
fortunately the owls are commoner. Yet
our nightin-
gales make up for them, when they can
escape their